

RECEIVED
SEP 12 1975
PERSONNEL DEPT.

To: John F. Finklea, M.D., Director, N.I.O.S.H.
From: John H. Lewis, M.D., N.I.O.S.H. physician assigned
to the Division of Occupational Hygiene, Department
of Labor and Industries, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Subject: Monsanto Polymers and Petrochemicals Company, Indian
Orchard, Mass.
Date: September 9, 1975

Since July of this year, this office has been informed of eighty-six deaths among past workers at Monsanto, Indian Orchard. This information was provided by K.O.S.H.A., Committee for Occupational Safety and Health Action, a group of workers formed at the time of the vinyl chloride alert to coordinate information on work-related health problems. This group has no official connection with the union.

The data were obtained from active and retired Monsanto workers who recalled fellow workers in the vinyl chloride and PVC operations who had died of any cause. Eighty-six of these deaths were confirmed by finding a Massachusetts death certificate, and the causes of death were tabulated. These diagnoses are shown in the table using the I.C.D. code numbers (eight revision). "Vinyl Chloride" workers were said to have worked in buildings 84, 88, or 92 in which vinyl chloride monomer was used. "P.V.C. fabrication" workers were said to have worked in building 85 in which V.C.M. was not used. "Maintenance" workers were said to have worked in any of the above buildings.

Among workers said to have worked in P.V.C. fabrication (building 85), 27.5% of the deaths, 14 of 51, were from cancer. This compares to 16.5% of deaths caused by cancer nationally. Furthermore, 4 of these 14 cancers were pancreatic. Cancer of the pancreas accounts for only 5.5% of cancer deaths nationally.

Officers of Monsanto, Indian Orchard have been informed of this apparent excess of cancer deaths, and they have expressed doubt about the reported employment history of some of the deceased workers. They have been asked to permit review by this office of the complete employment records for the P.V.C. fabrication area. Employment records of the deceased workers have also been requested. We propose to investigate the mortality experience among these workers by means of a cohort study.

JNL/mc

cc: Paul Alvarado, N.I.O.S.H.
Paul E. Bureau, Monsanto
K.O.S.H.A.
Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers, Local 288

RSV 0020801